

(12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
26.03.2003 Bulletin 2003/13

(51) Int Cl.7: F15B 21/04

(21) Application number: 02004278.4

(22) Date of filing: 27.02.2002

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE TR
Designated Extension States:
AL LT LV MK RO SI

- Tokuo, Kenichiro
Niihari-gun, Ibaraki 315-0054 (JP)
- Kuroiwa, Hiroshi
Hitachi-shi, Ibaraki 316-0025 (JP)
- Ozaki, Naoyuki
Hitachinaka-shi, Ibaraki 312-0002 (JP)

(30) Priority: 25.09.2001 JP 2001290527

(71) Applicant: Hitachi, Ltd.
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8010 (JP)

(74) Representative: Beetz & Partner Patentanwälte
Steinsdorfstrasse 10
80538 München (DE)

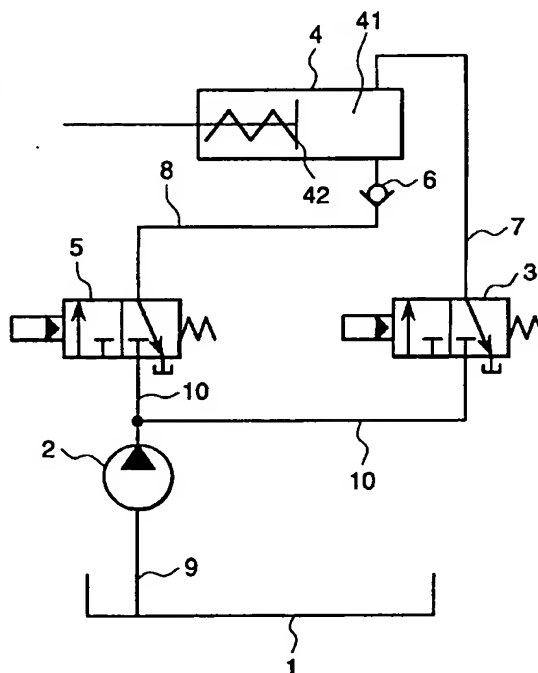
(72) Inventors:
• Yamasaki, Masaru
Niihari-gun, Ibaraki 315-0055 (JP)

(54) Hydraulic system with air sucking mechanism

(57) The invention relates to an hydraulic system comprising an air sucking hydraulic circuit 8, an air sucking control valve 5, and a check valve 6 provided in or before and after the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8, al-

lowing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from the air sucking control valve 5 to the hydraulic actuator 4 and preventing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4 to the air sucking control valve 5.

FIG. 1



Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

<Field of the Invention>

[0001] The present invention relates to a hydraulic system, more particularly a hydraulic system suited to perform a clutch operation or variable clutch operation of an automobile automatic transmission.

<Prior Art>

[0002] A hydraulic system is not hermetically sealed so that an air may enter a hydraulic circuit. In general, the hydraulic circuit is a so-called blind circuit which is closed at a hydraulic side, so that a hydraulic fluid can not circulate in the hydraulic circuit and hydraulic actuator. Thus, the air which enters the hydraulic circuit and hydraulic actuator is unlikely to be exhausted out of the circuit and will remain in them. The air in the circuit may delay the response of the hydraulic system and degrade the controllability of the system. To solve this problem, several ways have been proposed which provide an additional circuit to circulate the hydraulic fluid in the hydraulic circuit to exhaust the air out of it.

[0003] As an example of the conventional techniques, Japanese Application Patent Laid-Open Publication No. Hei 10-73105 discloses a hydraulic operation unit which comprises a piston/cylinder having a first chamber and second chamber, and another piston/cylinder having a third chamber. In this operation unit, the first and second chambers are connected via a first pressure valve, the first and third chambers are connected via a conduit on which a second pressure valve is provided. The first, second, and third chambers have a first, second, and third directional control valves respectively. The valves can control the hydraulic pressure for actuating the piston/cylinders. Those directional control valves are connected to a hydraulic fluid container via a pump. To evacuate the first and third chambers, the first and third directional control valves connect those chambers to the pump. The second directional control valve connects the second chamber to the hydraulic fluid container. Pressure higher than a pressure during the normal operation is applied to actuate the first and second pressure valves.

[0004] In the above described hydraulic operation unit, the piston/cylinder may operate during the air sucking so that an accidental operation of the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking must be prevented.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:

[0005] It is an object of the present invention to provide a hydraulic system having a reliable air sucking mechanism which is unlikely to malfunction.

[0006] To achieve the above mentioned object, the

present invention provides a hydraulic system comprising, a hydraulic actuator activated by a supplied hydraulic fluid, a control valve for generating a regulated hydraulic pressure or flow for activating the hydraulic actuator, and a control hydraulic circuit for transmitting the regulated hydraulic pressure or flow generated by the control valve to the hydraulic actuator, wherein the hydraulic system further comprising, an air sucking control valve connected to a primary pressure circuit or regulated pressure circuit, an air sucking hydraulic circuit connecting the air sucking control valve to the hydraulic actuator, and a check valve between the air sucking control valve and the hydraulic actuator, allowing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from the air sucking control valve to the hydraulic actuator and preventing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator to the air sucking control valve.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

[0007]

Fig. 1 shows a schematic diagram of an example of a hydraulic system having an air sucking mechanism according to the present invention.

Fig. 2 shows a schematic diagram of another example of a hydraulic system having an air sucking mechanism according to the present invention.

Fig. 3 shows a schematic diagram of still another example of a hydraulic system having an air sucking mechanism according to the present invention.

Fig. 4 shows a schematic diagram of an example of use of a hydraulic system according to the present invention for a clutch operation or variable clutch operation of an automobile automatic transmission.

Fig. 5 shows a schematic diagram of an example of an automobile having an automatic transmission using a hydraulic system having an air sucking mechanism according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION:

[0008] One embodiment of the present invention will be described below referring to Fig. 1.

[0009] Fig. 1 shows an example of a hydraulic system according to the present invention using hydraulic symbols. A hydraulic tank 1 contains a hydraulic fluid. A hydraulic pump 2, which is driven by a power supply (not shown), can suck the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic tank 1 via a suction circuit 9 and raise its pressure. The raised high pressure fluid is supplied to a control valve 3 and air sucking control valve 5 through a primary pressure circuit 10.

[0010] The primary pressure circuit 10 is a circuit through which the high pressure hydraulic fluid raised by the hydraulic pump 2 will flow. Thus the primary pressure circuit 10 is also called a high pressure circuit. This primary pressure circuit 10 also includes a circuit which

flows a hydraulic fluid having a pressure which is regulated in a pressure valve after being raised in the hydraulic pump 2.

[0011] The (not shown) power supply is controlled by a control unit (not shown) such that the hydraulic pump 2 can supply the hydraulic fluid to the primary pressure circuit 10 at a constant pressure. The control valve 3 is activated by an electrical signal from a control unit (not shown) and can control the hydraulic fluid in response to the signal. The control valve 3 can supply the fluid to a hydraulic chamber 41 of a hydraulic actuator 4 via a control hydraulic circuit 7. The control valve 3 may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0012] In the hydraulic actuator 4, a piston 42 will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3, and the piston 42 will be returned back by a built-in spring when the fluid is stopped. The hydraulic chamber 41 of the hydraulic actuator 4 has another hydraulic fluid port which is connected to the air sucking control valve 5 via a check valve 6 and a air sucking hydraulic circuit 8.

[0013] The check valve 6 can prevent a flow of the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4 to the air sucking control valve 5 and allow a reverse flow of the hydraulic fluid from the control valve 5 for air sucking 5 to the hydraulic actuator 4.

[0014] The air sucking control valve 5 may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or an on/off control valve which can turn on/off the flow of the hydraulic fluid in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0015] In the above mentioned configuration according to the present invention, the air sucking operation from the hydraulic chamber 41 of the hydraulic actuator 4 can be described as follows.

[0016] In the normal control operation of the hydraulic actuator 4, the control valve 3 receives an electrical signal such that the control valve can supply the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 41 of the hydraulic actuator 4. The piston 42 of the hydraulic actuator 4 will be pushed forward by the supplied hydraulic fluid. The control valve 3 receives an alternative signal such that the control valve 3 can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4. Thus, the piston 42 in the hydraulic actuator 41 will be returned back by the force of the built-in spring. In the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 receives an electrical signal such that the control valve 3 can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4, and the air sucking control valve 5 receives an electrical signal such that the control valve 5 can supply

the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 41 of the hydraulic actuator 4. Then, the hydraulic fluid can circulate through a path from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5, air sucking hydraulic circuit 8, check valve 6, to the hydraulic actuator 4, and from this hydraulic actuator 4 via the control hydraulic circuit 7, control valve 3, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Thus the air which exists in the hydraulic chamber 41 of the hydraulic actuator 4 and the control hydraulic circuit 7 will be exhausted into the hydraulic tank 1 by the circulation flow of the hydraulic fluid. During the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4. Thus, the pressure in the hydraulic actuator 4 will not increase and the hydraulic actuator 4 will not operate. After the air sucking operation, the air sucking control valve 5 receives an electrical signal such that the air sucking control valve 5 can close or the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8 can communicate with the circuit from the air sucking control valve 5 to the hydraulic tank 1. In the normal operation, the check valve 6 is closed so that the hydraulic fluid can not flow into the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8 from the hydraulic actuator 4, thus the controllability of the hydraulic system will not be degraded.

[0017] As described above, according to the embodiment, a simple hydraulic circuit can perform the air sucking operation only with the electrical signals from the control unit and can remove the air in the hydraulic system to prevent the degradation of the system controllability due to the air. Thus, a reliable hydraulic system is provided which can prevent a malfunction of the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking operation.

[0018] Another embodiment of the present invention will be described referring to Fig. 2.

[0019] Fig. 2 shows an example of a hydraulic system according to the present invention using hydraulic symbols. A hydraulic tank 1 contains a hydraulic fluid. A hydraulic pump 2, which is driven by a power supply (not shown), can suck the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic tank 1 via a suction circuit 9 and raise its pressure. The raised high pressure fluid is supplied to a control valve 3, second control valve 3B, and air sucking control valve 5 through a primary pressure circuit 10. The (not shown) power supply is controlled by a control unit (not shown) such that the hydraulic pump 2 can supply the hydraulic fluid to the primary pressure circuit 10 at a constant pressure. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B are activated by electrical signals from a control unit (not shown) and can control the hydraulic fluid in response to the signal. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can supply the fluid to a hydraulic actuator 4' via a control hydraulic circuit 7 and 7B respectively. Each of the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the

electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0020] In the hydraulic actuator 4', a piston 42' will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3, and the piston 42' will be returned back by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the second control valve 3B. Each of hydraulic chambers 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4' has another hydraulic fluid port which is connected to the air sucking control valve 5 via a check valve 6 or a second check valve 6' and an air sucking hydraulic circuit 8'.

[0021] The check valve 6 and second check valve 6B can prevent a flow of the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4' to the air sucking control valve 5 and allow a reverse flow of the hydraulic fluid from the air sucking control valve 5 to the hydraulic actuator 4'.

[0022] The air sucking control valve 5 may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or an on/off control valve which can turn on/off the flow of the hydraulic fluid in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0023] In the above mentioned configuration according to the present invention, the air sucking operation from the hydraulic actuator 4' can be described as follows.

[0024] In the normal control operation of the hydraulic actuator 4, the control valve 3 receives an electrical signal such that the control valve 3 can supply the hydraulic fluid into the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and the second control valve 3B receives an electrical signal such that the second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'. The piston 42' of the hydraulic actuator 4' will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can receive alternative signals such that the second control valve 3B can supply the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4' and the control valve 3 can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4'. Then, the piston 42' of the hydraulic actuator 4' will be returned back by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the second control valve 3B.

[0025] In the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B receive electrical signals such that the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chambers 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and the air sucking control valve 5 receives an electrical signal such that the air sucking control valve 5 can supply the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'. Then, the hydraulic fluid can circulate through two paths. One path is from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary

pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5', air sucking hydraulic circuit 8', check valve 6, to the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and from this hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4' via the control hydraulic circuit 7, control valve 3, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Another path is from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5, air sucking hydraulic circuit 8', check valve 6B, to the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and from this hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4' via the second control hydraulic circuit 7B, second control valve 3B, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Thus, the air which exists in the hydraulic actuator 4' and the control hydraulic circuit 7, 7B will be exhausted into the hydraulic tank 1 by the circulation flow of the hydraulic fluid. During the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 and the second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4'. Thus, the pressure in the hydraulic actuator 4' will not increase and the hydraulic actuator 4' will not operate. After the air sucking operation, the air sucking control valve 5 receives an electrical signal such that the air sucking control valve 5 can close or the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' can communicate with the circuit from the air sucking control valve 5' to the hydraulic tank 1. In the normal operation, the check valve 6 and 6B are closed so that the hydraulic fluid can not flow into the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' from the hydraulic actuator 4', thus the controllability of the hydraulic system will not be degraded.

[0026] In the case where more hydraulic actuators, more hydraulic chambers of the hydraulic actuator as well as more control valves and more control hydraulic circuits are used in the system, additional check valves and air sucking hydraulic circuits can easily provide the air sucking mechanism to the system.

[0027] As described above, according to the embodiment, even for the case of more control hydraulic circuits, a simple hydraulic circuit can perform the air sucking operation only with the electrical signals from the control unit and can remove the air in the hydraulic system to prevent the degradation of the system controllability due to the air. Thus, a reliable hydraulic system is provided which can prevent a malfunction of the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking operation.

[0028] Another embodiment of the present invention will be described referring to Fig. 3.

[0029] Fig. 3 shows an example of a hydraulic system according to the present invention using hydraulic symbols. A hydraulic tank 1 contains a hydraulic fluid. A hydraulic pump 2, which is driven by a power supply (not shown), can suck the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic tank 1 via a suction circuit 9 and raise its pressure. The raised high pressure fluid is supplied to a control valve 3, second control valve 3B, and air sucking control valve 5' through a primary pressure circuit 10. The (not shown) power supply is controlled by a control unit (not shown) such that the hydraulic pump 2 can supply the hydraulic

fluid to the primary pressure circuit 10 at a constant pressure. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B are activated by electrical signals from a control unit (not shown) and can control the hydraulic fluid in response to the signal. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can supply the fluid to a hydraulic actuator 4' via a control hydraulic circuit 7 and 7B respectively. Each of the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0030] In the hydraulic actuator 4', a piston 42' will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3, and the piston 42' will be returned back by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the second control valve 3B. Each of hydraulic chambers 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4' has another hydraulic fluid port which is connected to the air sucking control valve 5' via a check valve 6 or second check valve 6B and an air sucking hydraulic circuit 8'.

[0031] The check valve 6 and second check valve 6B can prevent a flow of the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4' to the air sucking control valve 5' and allow a reverse flow of the hydraulic fluid from the air sucking control valve 5' to the hydraulic actuator 4'.

[0032] The air sucking valve 5' is a pressure control valve which can open at a certain pressure or more in the primary pressure circuit 10. The air sucking control valve 5' is set to open at a pressure above a primary pressure during the normal operation.

[0033] In the above mentioned configuration according to the present invention, the air sucking operation from the hydraulic actuator 4' can be described as follows.

[0034] In the normal control operation of the hydraulic actuator 4, the control valve 3 receives an electrical signal such that the control valve 3 can supply the hydraulic fluid into the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and the second control valve 3B receives an electrical signal such that the second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'. The piston 42' of the hydraulic actuator 4' will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can receive alternative signals such that the second control valve 3B can supply the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4' and the control valve 3 can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4'. Then, the piston 42' of the hydraulic actuator 4' will be returned back by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the second control valve 3B.

[0035] In the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B receive electrical signals such that the control valve 3 and second control valve

3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chambers 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and the hydraulic pump 2 is activated to raise the primary pressure above a pressure during the normal operation to open the air sucking control valve 5'. Then, the hydraulic fluid can circulate through two paths. One path is from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5', air sucking hydraulic circuit 8', check valve 6, to the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and from this hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4' via the control hydraulic circuit 7, control valve 3, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Another path is from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5', air sucking hydraulic circuit 8', check valve 6B, to the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4', and from this hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4' via the second control hydraulic circuit 7B, second control valve 3B, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Thus, the air which exists in the hydraulic actuator 4' and the control hydraulic circuit 7, 7B will be exhausted into the hydraulic tank 1 by the circulation flow of the hydraulic fluid. During the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 and the second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4'. Thus, the pressure in the hydraulic actuator 4' will not increase and the hydraulic actuator 4' will not operate. After the air sucking operation, the air sucking control valve 5' receives an electrical signal such that the air sucking control valve 5' can close or the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' can communicate with the circuit from the air sucking control valve 5' to the hydraulic tank 1. In the normal operation, the check valve 6 and 6B are closed so that the hydraulic fluid can not flow into the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' from the hydraulic actuator 4', thus the controllability of the hydraulic system will not be degraded.

[0036] In the case where more hydraulic actuators, more hydraulic chambers of the hydraulic actuator as well as more control valves and more control hydraulic circuits are used in the system, additional check valves and air sucking hydraulic circuits can easily provide the air sucking mechanism to the system.

[0037] As described above, according to the embodiment, even for the case of more control hydraulic circuits, a simple hydraulic circuit can perform the air sucking operation only with the electrical signals from the control unit and can remove the air in the hydraulic system to prevent the degradation of the system controllability due to the air. Thus, a reliable hydraulic system is provided which can prevent a malfunction of the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking operation.

[0038] Still other embodiments of the present invention will be described referring to Figs. 4 and 5.

[0039] Fig. 4 shows an example of a hydraulic system according to the present invention used for a clutch operation or variable clutch operation of an automobile automatic transmission.

[0040] An output of an engine 11 is transmitted to a clutch 12. A first hydraulic actuator 4'A can control engagement and disengagement operation of the clutch 12. When the clutch 12 is engaged, the output of the engine 11 is transmitted to an input axis 13 of the transmission 16. The transmission 16 has gear pairs for speed reduction to each speed level, namely, G1 for 1st speed, G2 for 2nd speed, G3 for 3rd speed, and G4 for 4th speed. A first transmission clutch SC1 and second transmission clutch SC2 select a single gear pair. Only the selected gear pair can transmit the power. Not selected gear pairs run idle and can not transmit the power. The speed is further reduced by a speed reduction gear pair GR in the transmission 16. The engine power is output from an output axis 15 of the transmission 16 to drive wheels of an automobile (not shown).

[0041] A second hydraulic actuator 4'B can control a first transmission clutch SC1, and a third hydraulic actuator 4'C can control a second transmission clutch SC2. In the hydraulic system for activating the first hydraulic actuator 4'A, a hydraulic tank 1 contains a hydraulic fluid. A hydraulic pump 2, which is driven by a power supply (not shown), can suck the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic tank 1 via a suction circuit 9 and raise its pressure. The raised high pressure fluid is supplied to a control valve 3, second control valve 3B through a primary pressure circuit 10. The (not shown) power supply is controlled by a control unit (not shown) such that the hydraulic pump 2 can supply the hydraulic fluid to the primary pressure circuit 10 at a constant pressure. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B are activated by electrical signals from a control unit (not shown) and can control the hydraulic fluid in response to the signal. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can supply the fluid to the hydraulic actuator 4'A. Each of the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0042] In the hydraulic actuator 4'A, a piston 42' will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3, and the piston 42' will be returned back by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the second control valve 3B. Each of hydraulic chambers 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A has another hydraulic fluid port which is connected to the air sucking control valve 5 via a check valve 6 or second check valve 6B and an air sucking hydraulic circuit 8'.

[0043] The check valve 6 and second check valve 6B can prevent a flow of the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4'A to the air sucking control valve 5 and allow a reverse flow of the hydraulic fluid from the air sucking control valve 5 to the hydraulic actuator 4'A.

[0044] The air sucking control valve 5 may be a pressure control valve which can generate a hydraulic pressure in response to the electrical signal from the (not

shown) control unit, or a flow control valve which can generate a hydraulic flow in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit, or an on/off control valve which can turn on/off the flow of the hydraulic fluid in response to the electrical signal from the (not shown) control unit.

[0045] Although a hydraulic system is not shown for the second hydraulic actuator 4'B and the third hydraulic actuator 4'C, the primary pressure circuit 10 and the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' have branches for the second and third hydraulic actuators 4'B and 4'C. Each of the second and third hydraulic actuators 4'B and 4'C is also provided with the control valve, second control valve, check valve and second control valve as in the case of the first hydraulic actuator 4'A.

[0046] Fig. 5 shows an example of a hydraulic system according to the present invention installed in an automobile. Only the first hydraulic actuator 4'A is shown in Fig. 5, and the second hydraulic actuator 4'B, the third hydraulic actuator 4'C and the hydraulic systems including the actuators are not shown. The output of the transmission 16 is transmitted via a propeller shaft 18 to a final gear 19 and turned to driving wheels 20 to accelerate/decelerate the automobile 21.

[0047] In the above mentioned configuration according to the present invention, the air sucking operation from the hydraulic actuator 4'A (4'B, 4'C) can be described as follows. The hydraulic actuators 4'A, 4'B and 4'C are subjected to the same air sucking operation so that only the air sucking operation for the first hydraulic actuator 4'A will be described as a representative.

[0048] In the normal control operation of the hydraulic actuator 4'A, the control valve 3 receives an electrical signal such that the control valve 3 can supply the hydraulic fluid into the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A, and the second control valve 3B receives an electrical signal such that the second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A. The piston 42' of the hydraulic actuator 4'A will be pushed forward by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the control valve 3. The control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can receive alternative signals such that the second control valve 3B can supply the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A and the control valve 3 can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A. Then, the piston 42' of the hydraulic actuator 4'A will be returned back by the hydraulic fluid supplied from the second control valve 3B.

[0049] In the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B receive electrical signals such that the control valve 3 and second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic chambers 43, 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A, and the air sucking control valve 5 receives an electrical signal such that the air sucking control valve 5 can supply the hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic chamber 43, 44 of the

hydraulic actuator 4'A. Then, the hydraulic fluid can circulate through two paths. One path is from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5, air sucking hydraulic circuit 8', check valve 6, to the hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A, and from this hydraulic chamber 43 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A via the control hydraulic circuit 7, control valve 3, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Another path is from the hydraulic tank 1 via the suction circuit 9, hydraulic pump 2, primary pressure circuit 10, air sucking control valve 5, air sucking hydraulic circuit 8', check valve 6B, to the hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A, and from this hydraulic chamber 44 of the hydraulic actuator 4'A via the second control hydraulic circuit 7B, second control valve 3B, back to the hydraulic tank 1. Thus, the air which exists in the hydraulic actuator 4'A or the control hydraulic circuit 7, 7B will be exhausted into the hydraulic tank 1 by the circulation flow of the hydraulic fluid.

[0050] During the air sucking operation, the control valve 3 and the second control valve 3B can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator 4. Thus, the pressure in the hydraulic actuator 4' will not increase and the hydraulic actuator 4' will not operate. After the air sucking operation, the air sucking control valve 5 receives an electrical signal such that the air sucking control valve 5' can close or the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' can communicate with the circuit from the air sucking control valve 5' to the hydraulic tank 1. In the normal operation, the check valve 6 and 6B are closed so that the hydraulic fluid can not flow into the air sucking hydraulic circuit 8' from the hydraulic actuator 4'A, thus the controllability of the hydraulic system will not be degraded.

[0051] As described above, according to the embodiment, even for the case of more control hydraulic circuits, a simple hydraulic circuit can perform the air sucking operation only by the electrical signals from the control unit and can remove the air in the hydraulic system to prevent the degradation of the system controllability due to the air. Thus, a reliable hydraulic system is provided which can prevent a malfunction of the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking operation.

[0052] In the case of the hydraulic actuator installed in the automobile automatic transmission, a response delay of the hydraulic actuator due to the compressibility of the air in the hydraulic system would provide a control time lag which may cause problems such as transmission shock. Therefore, the air in the hydraulic circuit must be exhausted to ensure the quick response of the hydraulic actuator. However, it is very difficult to suck the air from the hydraulic system because the automatic transmission is generally mounted on the underbody of the automobile. According to the present invention, an automatic transmission can be provided which can automatically perform the air sucking operation by a program in a control unit and always ensure the quick response of the hydraulic actuator and prevent a runaway

automobile caused by the malfunction of the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking operation. The present invention can also provide an automobile mounted with the automatic transmission.

5 [0053] According to the present invention, the control valve can receive the hydraulic fluid from the hydraulic actuator during the air sucking operation, so that the pressure in the hydraulic actuator will not increase and the hydraulic actuator will not operate. In the normal operation, the check valve is closed so that the hydraulic fluid can not flow into the air sucking hydraulic circuit from the hydraulic actuator, and the controllability of the hydraulic system will not be degraded. Thus, a reliable hydraulic system using a simple configuration can be provided.

Claims

- 20 1. A hydraulic system comprising,
 - a hydraulic actuator activated by a supplied hydraulic fluid;
 - a control valve for generating a regulated hydraulic pressure or flow for activating said hydraulic actuator; and
 - 25 a control hydraulic circuit for transmitting said regulated hydraulic pressure or flow generated by said control valve to said hydraulic actuator, wherein said hydraulic system further comprising,
 - 30 an air sucking control valve connected to a primary pressure circuit or regulated pressure circuit;
 - an air sucking hydraulic circuit connecting said air sucking control valve to said hydraulic actuator; and
 - 35 a check valve between said air sucking control valve and said hydraulic actuator, allowing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said air sucking control valve to said hydraulic actuator and preventing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said hydraulic actuator to said air sucking control valve.
- 40 2. A hydraulic system comprising,
 - 45 a plurality of hydraulic chambers provided in at least one hydraulic actuator activated by a supplied hydraulic fluid;
 - a plurality of control valves corresponding to said plurality of hydraulic chambers, said control valves generating a regulated hydraulic pressure or flow for activating said hydraulic actuator; and
 - 50 a plurality of control hydraulic circuits transmitting said regulated hydraulic pressure or flow generated by said plurality of control valves to each of said plurality of hydraulic chambers, wherein said hydraulic system further comprising,
 - 55 an air sucking control valve connected to a primary pressure circuit or regulated pressure circuit;

and

an air sucking hydraulic circuit connecting said air sucking control valve to said hydraulic actuator, said air sucking hydraulic circuit having branches connected to said plurality of hydraulic chambers, each branch being connected to each of said plurality of hydraulic chambers via a check valve allowing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said air sucking control valve to said hydraulic actuator and preventing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said hydraulic actuator to said air sucking control valve.

an air sucking hydraulic circuit connecting said air sucking control valve to said hydraulic actuator,

said air sucking hydraulic circuit having branches connected to said plurality of hydraulic chambers, each branch being connected to each of said plurality of hydraulic chambers via a check valve allowing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said air sucking control valve to said hydraulic actuator and preventing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said hydraulic actuator to said air sucking control valve.

3. A hydraulic system according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said air sucking control valve is a pressure control valve which can open at a supplied pressure higher than or equal to a certain value.
4. A hydraulic system comprising,
 - a hydraulic chamber having an inflow and outflow of a hydraulic fluid therefrom;
 - a hydraulic actuator activated by the inflow and outflow of said hydraulic fluid from said hydraulic chamber;
 - a first control valve controlling the inflow and outflow of said hydraulic fluid from said hydraulic chamber;
 - a second control valve controlling the inflow of said hydraulic fluid to said hydraulic actuator;
 - a check valve between said hydraulic chamber and said second control valve, allowing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said second control valve to said hydraulic chamber and preventing a flow of a hydraulic fluid from said hydraulic chamber to said second control valve; and a control system controlling said first control valve in such a way for a hydraulic fluid to flow out of said hydraulic chamber and controlling said second control valve in such a way for a hydraulic fluid to flow in said hydraulic chamber.
5. An automobile having a hydraulic system comprising,
 - a hydraulic actuator activated by a supplied hydraulic fluid;
 - a plurality of control valves generating a regulated hydraulic pressure or flow for a plurality of hydraulic chambers provided in at least one hydraulic actuator for activating said hydraulic actuator; and
 - a plurality of control hydraulic circuits transmitting said regulated hydraulic pressure or flow generated by said plurality of control valves to said hydraulic actuator,
 - wherein said hydraulic system further comprising,
 - an air sucking control valve connected to a primary pressure circuit or regulated pressure circuit; and

FIG. 1

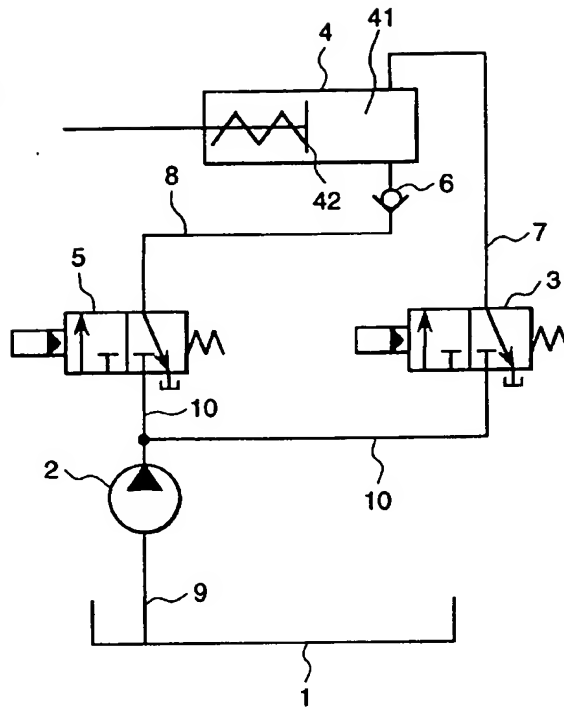


FIG. 2

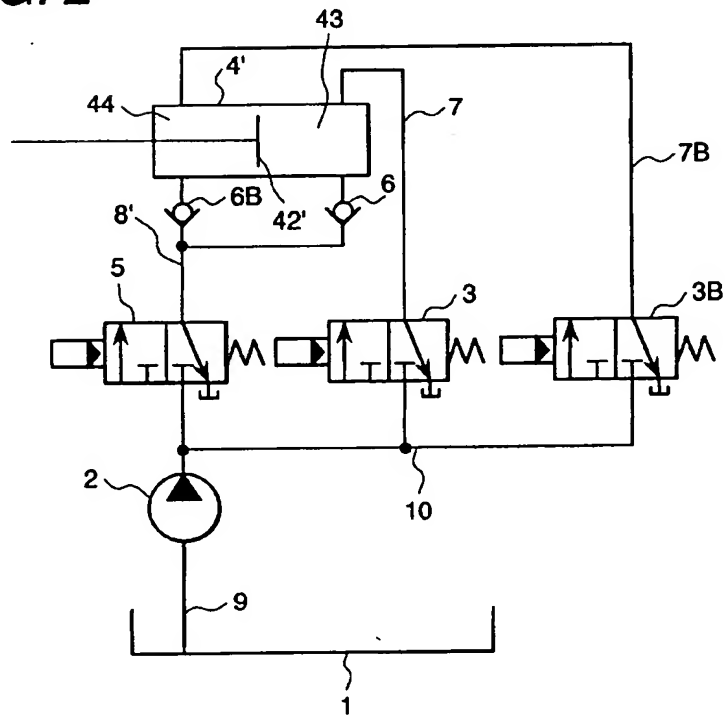


FIG. 3

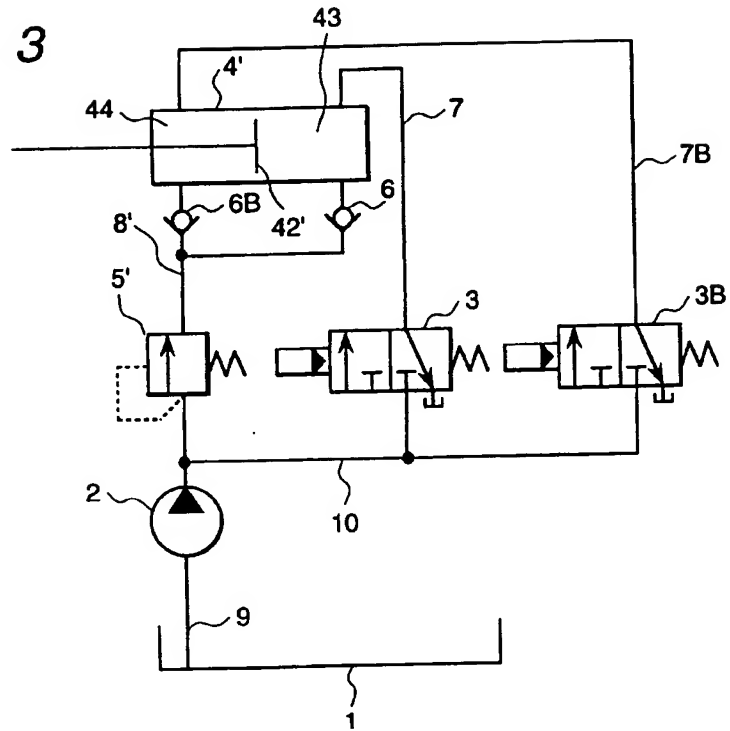


FIG. 5

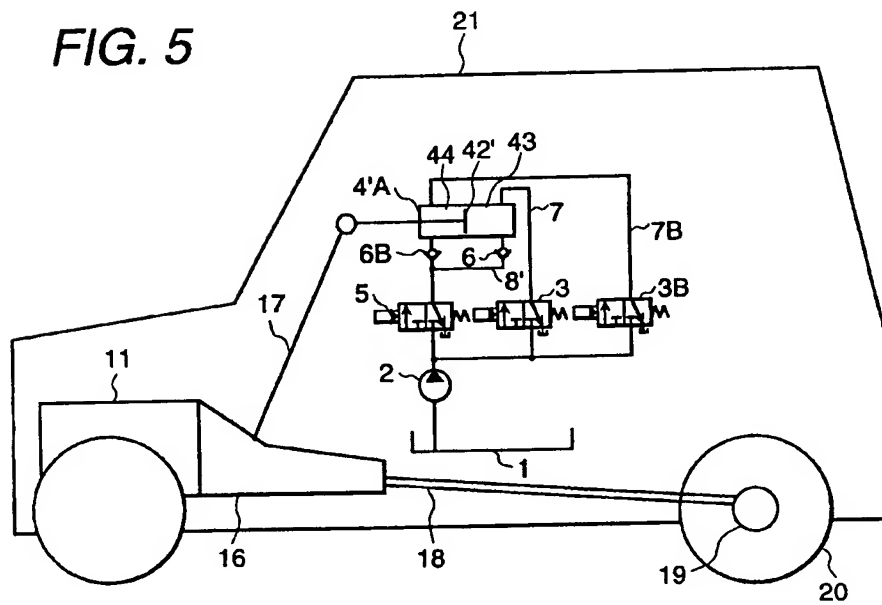
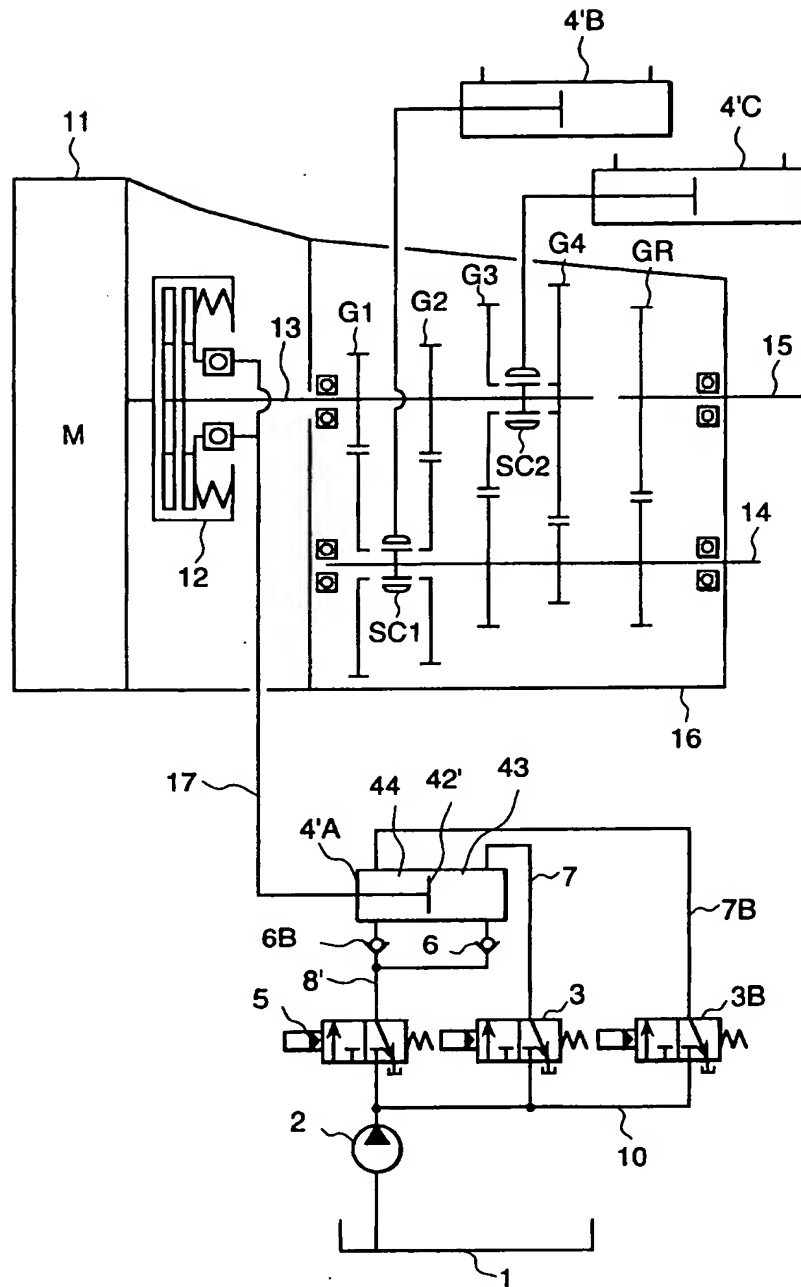


FIG. 4





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 02 00 4278

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 6 079 206 A (PETRZIK GUNTHER ET AL) 27 June 2000 (2000-06-27) * column 7, line 43 - column 8, line 43; figures 2,2A *	1-5	F15B21/04
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 014, no. 464 (M-1033), 9 October 1990 (1990-10-09) & JP 02 186108 A (HITACHI LTD), 20 July 1990 (1990-07-20) * abstract; figure *	1,3	
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 012, no. 325 (M-737), 5 September 1988 (1988-09-05) -& JP 63 092804 A (KOMATSU LTD), 23 April 1988 (1988-04-23) * abstract *	1,2,4	
X	DE 44 39 454 A (MAN TAKRAF FOERDERTECHNIK GMBH) 9 May 1996 (1996-05-09) * figure 2 *	1	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			F15B
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 30 July 2002	Examiner Sbaili, M
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

EPO FORM 1503 (3.12.1994)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 02 00 4278

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

30-07-2002

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 6079206	A	27-06-2000	DE 19627974 A1	15-01-1998
			EP 0818629 A1	14-01-1998
			JP 10073105 A	17-03-1998
			JP 2002115703 A	19-04-2002
JP 02186108	A	20-07-1990	NONE	
JP 63092804	A	23-04-1988	JP 2552836 B2	13-11-1996
DE 4439454	A	09-05-1996	DE 4439454 A1	09-05-1996
			CA 2161619 A1	12-03-1996
			CN 1130726 A	11-09-1996
			RU 2140022 C1	20-10-1999

EPO FORM P459

For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82

THIS PAGE BLANK (USPTO)